 Missouri Department of Natural Resources Administrative Policies and Procedures		
Chapter 2 Communications		
Communications Policy	Effective date	Revised
Number: 2.01	February 2, 2004	January 8, 2007

The Missouri Department of Natural Resources will provide information on departmental issues and events in a timely and responsive manner. The department values openness to all points of view and will readily enter into dialog about our responsibilities concerning Missouri's water, air, land, energy, cultural and recreational resources.

Correspondence with official department media such as letterhead, memo paper, web postings or e-mails is official business.

The department will provide assistance and guidance so that staff can effectively provide information on department events and issues and understand needs and concerns.

REFERENCES

Missouri Attorney General's Office Website (Sunshine Law)
<http://ago.mo.gov/missouri-law/sunshine-law>

Missouri Sunshine Law: RSMo 610


Related DNR policies or manuals

Conduct and Ethics 1.01
 Sunshine Law Requests 2.02
 Protection under Whistleblowers Law 1.06

Publication Style Manual <http://n-nr1ntra.ads.state.mo.us/communications/default.htm>
 Public Participation Guide <http://n-nr1ntra.ads.state.mo.us/communications/default.htm>

The hot sheet is accessible on the department's Intranet footer <http://n-nr1ntra.ads.state.mo.us/diroffice/handbook/documents/hot-sheet.docx>

Other useful communication information is contained on the Department Communications web page <http://n-nr1ntra.ads.state.mo.us/communications/default.htm>

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DEFINITIONS

Correspondence: documents written by department staff used to communicate. Examples include letters, memorandums and e-mails.

Director of communications: Provides communications support for the department director; serves as the department's spokesperson as needed. This position has final authority and responsibility on all communications and media relations for the department.

Division information officer: Staff in divisional administrative offices that provide guidance and assistance to ensure two way communication on media calls, publication development and other public information-related projects and initiatives.

Elected official: Governor's Office staff, state elected officials, legislators, members of Missouri's congressional delegation, local officials, local elected officials and any staff of the above.


Media or press: A person working for a newspaper, radio and television station, trade journals, the Internet, newsletter and other forms of communications.

Office of Communications: Part of the department's Director's Office, the office oversees department media efforts and publication development, including Missouri Resources.

Photographs and illustrations: All photographs, illustrations, paintings, computer graphics or artwork that may be used in department publications.

Publications: All printed material and electronic media, including brochures, reports, proceedings and audio-visual productions, for the general public.

Public information specialists: Designated program staff who develop and coordinate public information within a program.

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GENERAL PROVISIONS

The department is open to requests for information. This includes general requests as well as Sunshine Law requests. The departmental communication policy and procedures are meant to operate in conjunction with division public information procedures. Any conflict between the two is unintentional; however, should it occur, the departmental policy overrides divisional procedures.

Providing information

The department will provide information requested to the best of our ability; seek input through various means of public participation such as public meetings, hearings and availability sessions; proactively address issues or concerns; and cooperatively work on issues and concerns through stakeholder meetings and workgroups.

Requests for information should be answered as quickly as possible. Use common sense and provide responses in a timely manner, professionally and with a mind toward service.

Media requests should be responded to the same day as receiving the call. Other requests for information should be responded to, at a minimum, within three working days with either the materials or information on when or how the materials may be provided.

If one feels uncomfortable providing the information or is unsure of what to provide, let the requestor know the information will be provided and then coordinate with an immediate supervisor or the division information officer on how best to provide the information.


Verbal information provided to elected officials

Whenever an elected official contacts an employee of the department, the employee will answer questions and address the concerns objectively and factually. If the employee cannot provide answers, it is best to state so and then follow up with a reply after the answers have been obtained.

If an elected official's inquiry is about a sensitive or controversial issue and

- the employee is uncomfortable with answering or responding, or
- the employee is uncertain of the department's position,

the employee should state that he will speak to appropriate management, and the employee or an appropriate manager will return the call with the department's response.

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If the issue requires input from a number of staff or programs to gain a complete picture about a situation, because issues often cross program lines, program staff should assure the caller that an appropriate staff person will return the call in a timely manner. It is best to give an approximate time the call will be returned; such as within several hours or two days, whatever is realistic and timely. Generally, the quicker the department responds, the better.

After speaking with the elected official, the employee sends a summary via e-mail of the conversation, along with any other pertinent information, to all the following:

- her/his immediate supervisor
- program director
- division director
- the appropriate legislative liaison and
- any other management staff known to be working on the issue or who might have an interest in the elected official's inquiry.

The legislative liaisons may be contacted through the deputy department director for policy. To find out who these liaisons are, contact the department's Office of the Director (573) 751-3195.

Outside of a commitment for more information concerning the nature of the elected official's inquiry, staff should not promise or commit anything on behalf of the department, division, program or unit until they have received clearance from the proper individuals in the chain of command.

Communications with the media and elected officials


Staff will notify their division information officer about contact with the media.

Staff will notify their division and department legislative liaison of communication, either written or verbal, with elected officials in performance of their job. Staff may communicate with elected officials on minor, routine or technical issues.

Missouri's Whistleblower's Law

Staff are provided protection under Missouri's Whistleblower's Law to report

- a violation of any law, rule or regulation; or
- mismanagement, a gross waste of funds or abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health and safety, if the disclosure is not specifically prohibited by law.

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An employee cannot be required to give notice to the supervisor or appointing authority prior to making any such report.

If an employee wishes to talk with a member of the legislature or the state auditor's office about issues related to Section 105.055 (Missouri's Whistleblower's Law) during normal work hours, department leave policies must be followed. For more information on Missouri's Whistleblower's Law – refer to DNR Policy 1.06.

Working with the media

Communication with news media needs to be coordinated with any program information specialists and the division information officer. This coordination is the responsibility of the staff person who makes or receives the initial contact. Additional guidance can be found in 2.01-01 Media Procedures.

Generally, program staff coordinate with the division information officer. The division information officer can then coordinate with the Office of Communications if necessary. If the division information officer is not available, the program staff person can work directly with the Office of Communications by calling (573) 751-1010.


Correspondence

All documents are open records according to Missouri's Sunshine Law, unless otherwise protected by the law. Further information on our procedures for Sunshine requests is contained in 2.02 Sunshine Law Requests and 2.02-01 Sunshine Law Procedures.

Staff are responsible for the content of their communication. All correspondence must be factual, professional and courteous. Inappropriate language, information or content will not be included in any correspondence.

Correspondence will comply with appropriate provisions of the Publication Style Manual. Signature blocks on e-mails will only contain the sender's contact information. Contact information can include department work title, professional designation such as "P.E.", work address, work phone number, work fax number and work Internet and e-mail addresses. No other items are allowed in an e-mail signature block. This includes quotes, graphics and taglines. The only items allowed in signature blocks are work-related ones approved by a division information officer.

Recycled paper is to be used as much as possible. Multipage correspondence will be duplexed. The director of communications approves official department letterhead and memorandum

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paper. Electronic letterhead is available and can be printed in black and white. Pre-printed letterhead (in green ink) is the preferred option for external communications.

Correspondence is state property. Management and the individual's supervisor may access an individual's paper files, as well as access an individual's e-mail, without prior notification to the individual.

Written correspondence with the Governor's Office, offices of statewide elected officials or the congressional delegation

Written correspondence between the department and the Governor's Office, statewide elected officials or congressional delegation will be signed by the department director to ensure that proper communication and coordination takes place between the Department of Natural Resources and these offices. This correspondence, including e-mail, must be forwarded to the Office of the Director prior to submission to the Governor's Office, statewide elected officials, or the congressional delegation.

Division directors must ensure divisional procedures support procedures from the Governor's Office and the department. Discrepancies should be referred to the department's director of communications.

Governor's Office request for a letter for the Governor's signature


When the Governor's Office requests a letter for the governor's signature, the Office of the Director will refer the request to the appropriate program with a copy of the request sent to the division director. The letter must be drafted according to the expectations of the Governor's Office. The appropriate division director will review and concur on letters or memos drafted for the Governor's signature before forwarding it to the Office of the Director. The requested correspondence is due back to the Office of the Director within 10 days of notice. The Office of the Director will note if a response is required in less than 10 days.

Requests for written information from the Missouri General Assembly and other elected officials

Requests for written information from members of the General Assembly or other elected officials will be coordinated with the division director, who will determine if the division, program/district or section/park/site should reply. The division director will review any written information provided to a legislator or an elected official prior to sending.

E-mail

Electronic mail (e-mail) is a method of sharing or transmitting information. Information, language or other content not appropriate for a letter or memorandum must not be included in e-

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mail. E-mail is the same as a paper document. Staff are responsible for the content of e-mail, just as if it were a signed paper document. Discretion must be used when using e-mail for sensitive matters.

E-mail can be used the same as a letter or memorandum. E-mail may be used as a substitute for a paper copy of any document that normally would require a signature.

Each employee using email must have a secure e-mail system password. Employees are to change the password on a regular basis according to the state password requirements. Passwords are confidential and should not be divulged to anyone else. Passwords are designed strictly to protect departmental resources and do not create privacy for any individual.

Sending an e-mail is no indication that the recipient will receive, open and/or read the message. Sending an e-mail does not guarantee that time-critical information will be read by the recipient in the time frame that the sender desires. Where time-critical action is necessary a direct conversation or telephone call is appropriate.

All e-mail messages sent are stored indefinitely.

ITSD-DNR is responsible for maintaining the department-wide address list of e-mail users, based upon the names provided to them. Other e-mail groups are maintained by the appropriate individual(s) who have knowledge of who should be included in a given group.


DNR provides an e-mail system for staff use. "Web-based" e-mail services, and other Internet services that offer interaction that could be handled via the standard departmental e-mail system are prohibited.

Ownership of photographs and illustrations

Photographs and illustrations are the property of the Department of Natural Resources if one or more of the following criteria are met:

- Produced with material or film purchased by the department.
- Produced with department equipment.
- Produced by a department employee while on duty.

Staff should be credited for the photography or illustrations used in publications or other materials.

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Copies of departmental photos or illustrations are made at the expense of the requestor unless waived by the division information officer or the department's director of communications.

Publications

The director of communications will approve all department publications that are mass-produced for public information. The appropriate division information officer will approve all division or program publications mass produced for public information and will ensure that the director of communication is informed about the publication.

Other work products

All work products created and produced by department staff within the scope and course of their employment are the property of the department. Department personnel shall not copyright or otherwise claim personal ownership or control over such work product. The department director approves any exceptions. Permission to reprint work products should be credited to the department.

The following terms are to be included with any data or data sets compiled by the department:

There is no warranty, expressed or implied for data and data sets compiled by the department as to the accuracy of the data and related materials. Distribution of data or data sets does not constitute such warranty. No responsibility is assumed by the department in the use of these data or related materials.

For further information or assistance, check with the appropriate supervisor, division information officer or with the Office of Communications at (573) 751-1010.